

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 12796 101743Z
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8999
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 12796

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: GV, UK, SHUM
SUBJECT: BRITAIN AND GUINEA: HUMAN RIGHTS AND
REPRESENTATION

REF: (A) CONAKRY 1281; (B) CONAKRY 1488

1. EMBASSY OFFICER DISCUSSED REFTELS WITH MICHAEL HOLDING, ACTING HEAD OF FCO WEST AFRICA DEPARTMENT, AUGUST 10. HOLDING SAID THERE HAD BEEN OCCASIONAL DIFFICULTIES WITH THE GUINEANS OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS, PARTICULARLY ON A BBC INTERVIEW WITH SEVERAL GUINEAN EXILES IN PARIS, AND MORE RECENTLY, ON THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SURVEY. THE FCO IS AWARE, HOWEVER, THAT THE AI REPORT IS SOMEWHAT DATED.

2. STILL, HOLDING WENT ON, WHEN THE GUINEAN NON-RESIDENT AMBASSADOR PRESENTED CREDENTIALS HERE THREE WEEKS AGO, HE RECEIVED A HUMAN RIGHTS "ROASTING" FROM BOTH FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN AND MINISTER OF STATE TED ROWLANDS. THE AMBASSADOR APPARENTLY GAVE A SPIRITED DEFENSE, CRITICIZED AI SOURCES, POINTED TO RECENT
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PAGE 02 LONDON 12796 101743Z

IMPROVEMENTS, AND EMPHASIZED GUINEA'S DESIRE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THE WEST. HOLDING THEN RECOUNTED BUTLER'S INTERVIEW WITH CISSOKO, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS EMOTIONAL BUT CORDIAL WITH CISSOKO INDICATING GUINEAN INTEREST IN IMPROVED CONTACTS WITH THE UK.

3. EMBASSY OFFICER ASKED WHETHER THE FCO HAD PLANS TO OPEN A POST IN CONAKRY. HOLDING ANSWERED THAT THERE HAS BEEN INTEREST IN DOING SO, LARGELY FOR COMMERCIAL REASONS, BUT HUMAN RIGHTS AND STAFFING PROBLEMS HAD PROVED TO BE OBSTACLES. THE PLAN WHICH THE WEST AFRICA DEPARTMENT HAD PROPOSED (A "MINI" MISSION) HAD CONSEQUENTLY BEEN SHELVED. LAST WEEK, HOWEVER, JOE FELLI SAW TED ROWLANDS IN LONDON AND PRAISED SEKOU TOURE'S PERFORMANCE AT THE OAU SUMMIT. THIS ACCOUNT REVIVED ROWLANDS' INTEREST AND HE WILL LOOK AT THE QUESTION AGAIN IN THE AUTUMN. EMBASSY OFFICER SAID WE HAD BEEN ENCOURAGED BY RECENT POLITICAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN GUINEA, AND THAT THE OPENING OF A BRITISH MISSION THERE MIGHT STIMULATE SEKOU TOURE TO CONTINUE IN HIS PRESENT DIRECTION. HOLDING APPRECIATE THE SUGGESTION THAT THE OPINIONS IN REFTEL (A) MIGHT BE HELPFUL WHEN ROWLANDS REVIEWS THE QUESTION LATER IN THE YEAR.

4. COMMENT: GUINEAN AFFAIRS ARE NOT FOLLOWED CLOSELY HERE. IT SEEMS TO US, HOWEVER, THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH REPRESENTATION IN CONAKRY WOULD FURTHER ENCOURAGE SEKOU TOURE'S NEW COURSE. DEPARTMENT MIGHT WANT TO MENTION THIS POSSIBILITY TO UK EMBASSY WASHINGTON SOMETIME BEFORE THE ROWLANDS REVIEW.

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PAGE 03 LONDON 12796 101743Z

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